

Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod

22nd Assembly

Sugar Land Marriott Town Square
May 28-30, 2009

Preliminary, Partial Minutes of the 2009 Synod Assembly

Thursday, May 28, 2009:

The Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod Assembly began with opening worship at St. Martin's Lutheran Church, Sugar Land, Texas from 1:00—2:15 p.m. At 3:15 p.m., Bishop Mike Rinehart called the Assembly to order at the Sugar Land Marriott Town Square. The 2009 Assembly began with prayer, and was duly organized by the adoption of a first credentials report, standing rules, and agenda program, as amended.

After additional business matters and a **State of the Synod** Keynote presentation by Bishop Rinehart, the Assembly was adjourned to take part in **Café Table conversations around Human Sexuality**, from 5:15—6:30 p.m.

Friday, May 29, 2009:

On Friday, there were two business sessions, with a worship service and lunch break in between. The Assembly heard two keynote presentations on evangelism as follows:

- Emmanuel Jackson on **Leadership as Evangelism** in the morning; and
- Kerry Nelson on **Stewardship as Evangelism** in the afternoon

The Assembly then adjourned to form a **Quasi Committee of the Whole** from 5:15 p.m.—6:00 p.m. in order to engage in further discussion of human sexuality, **focusing on the proposed social statement on human sexuality and the proposed ministry guidelines.** At 6:00 p.m., the Assembly was called back to order for further business, elections, and the consideration of three resolutions:

Resolution No. 10 in support of the formation of Congregational Justice Teams passed by voice vote.

Resolution No. 12 to adopt the core statement for the Christian community regarding immigrants and refugees passed by voice vote. [One minor amendment was made to the “implications language” without objection.]

Resolution No. 20 to declare the synod a “Community of Respect” under the Anti-Defamation League’s “Coalition for Mutual Respect” passed, as amended, (and without objection to the two amendments).

Saturday, May 30, 2009:

On Saturday, the meeting began with a keynote by Steve Cauley and Karen Landahl on **Justice as Evangelism.**

The final Credentials Report was approved with 337 voting members, which included 213 lay members and 124 clergy members. There were also 66 visitors present for a total of 403 people in attendance.

The Assembly then considered the remaining Resolutions. David Hollrah, Chair of the Reference and Counsel Committee moved the “supermajority” resolutions to the floor in one block. These Resolutions (No. 6, 7, 8, 9, and 14) were all similar, except for

Resolution 14 that added a second Resolved paragraph. Reference and Counsel recommended dividing Resolution 14 into 2 separate resolutions, one for each Resolved paragraph. With the unanimous consent of the Assembly, Resolution 14 was so divided into two resolutions. Resolution 14A on the first Resolved paragraph was debated and voted on.

Resolution 14A seeking to memorialize the 2009 Churchwide Assembly to require a 2/3's vote instead of a majority vote on any policy or practice change in the rostering of pastors and other ministers and leaders of the ELCA was defeated by voice vote.

Resolution 14B to urge that the voting members from the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod present the 2/3's vote requirement as a change to the rules of procedure for the 2009 Churchwide Assembly was taken by a vote of cards. The vote was close and a call from the floor came for a division. The Chair explained that a card vote is a division, but that a request could now be made to count the vote. A motion was made to count the vote, which was accepted by the Chair and the Assembly without objection. Therefore, a standing vote was taken and counted. The vote was 114 in favor and 136 against. Therefore, Resolution 14B was defeated.

The next block of Resolutions to be considered were the resolutions to adopt the social statement on human sexuality and to adopt the four parts of the proposed Recommendations on Ministry Policies, as recommended by the ELCA Church Council. These Resolutions were No. 11 and Nos. 17—19, and they were all substantially similar. Reference and Counsel recommended that Resolution 11 be divided into two Resolutions, one for each Resolved paragraph on the adoption of the social statement and the ministry policies, and also recommended that the vote be taken by paper ballot. There was no objection to dividing Resolution 11 into Resolutions 11A and 11B. There was an objection to voting by ballot, and so a standing, counted

vote was taken on that question. The vote was counted, and resulted in a 132—132 tie, leaving it to the Chair to break the tie. The Chair broke the tie by voting to have the votes taken by paper ballot.

Resolution 11A to memorialize the 2009 Churchwide Assembly to adopt the proposed Social Statement on Human Sexuality and its implementing resolutions, as recommended by the ELCA Church Council, was then taken up and debated by the Assembly. Reference and Counsel made no recommendation on Resolution 11A.

During debate, a Point of Order was made by Pastor Pat Keene. He called for a recount on the ballot vote. The Chair ruled that his point of order will be treated as a motion to reconsider the vote. The Chair determined that the motion was not well taken because the movant did not vote on the prevailing side of the question.

After further debate, a vote by paper ballot was taken. **Resolution 11A on the Social Statement on Human Sexuality passed by a vote of 198 in favor and 66 against.** There were 4 invalid ballots.

Resolution 11B to memorialize the 2009 Churchwide Assembly to adopt the four parts of the proposed Recommendations on Ministry Policies, as recommended by the ELCA Church Council, was then taken up and debated. Reference and Counsel made no recommendation on Resolution 11B.

After a 45-minute debate, there was a motion to move the previous question. A vote to close debate was taken by cards requiring a 2/3's vote. The motion to close debate was carried. Paper ballots were then distributed for the vote on Resolution 11B on the ministry policies.

Resolution 11B on the proposed Recommendations on Ministry Policies passed by a ballot vote of 149 in favor and 110 opposed. There were 6 blank or invalid ballots.

The remaining Resolutions, Nos. 1-5 on affirming the current ministry policies, and No. 15 on rejecting the proposed social statement, and No. 16 on rejecting the proposed ministry policies, were then addressed by Reference and Counsel. Reference and Counsel recommended that the Assembly not consider these remaining resolutions as they were on substantially the same questions as had been previously considered by the Assembly in Resolutions 11A and 11B. Reference and Counsel also noted that the Assembly had been consistently informed on Thursday and Friday that remaining resolutions on substantially similar questions would be ruled out of order once the Assembly had reached decisions on those questions by the adoption of preceding Resolutions, so that no member of the Assembly was surprised by this ruling. The Chair agreed with the recommendation of Reference and Counsel and ruled that the remaining Resolutions were out of order. **With the unanimous consent of the Assembly, the remaining Resolutions were ruled out of order.**

The Chair then thanked Reference and Counsel. The Chair also thanked the Assembly for its courtesy in debate, and in making no personal attacks at all in the midst of our disagreements and discussion.

After additional business, including the adoption of the synod budget for 2009—2010, the Assembly was adjourned *sine die*, and concluded with closing worship and communion.

Respectfully Submitted,

Arthur Murphy
Synod Secretary